Perfins As Postal History #9
Mixed Country Franking

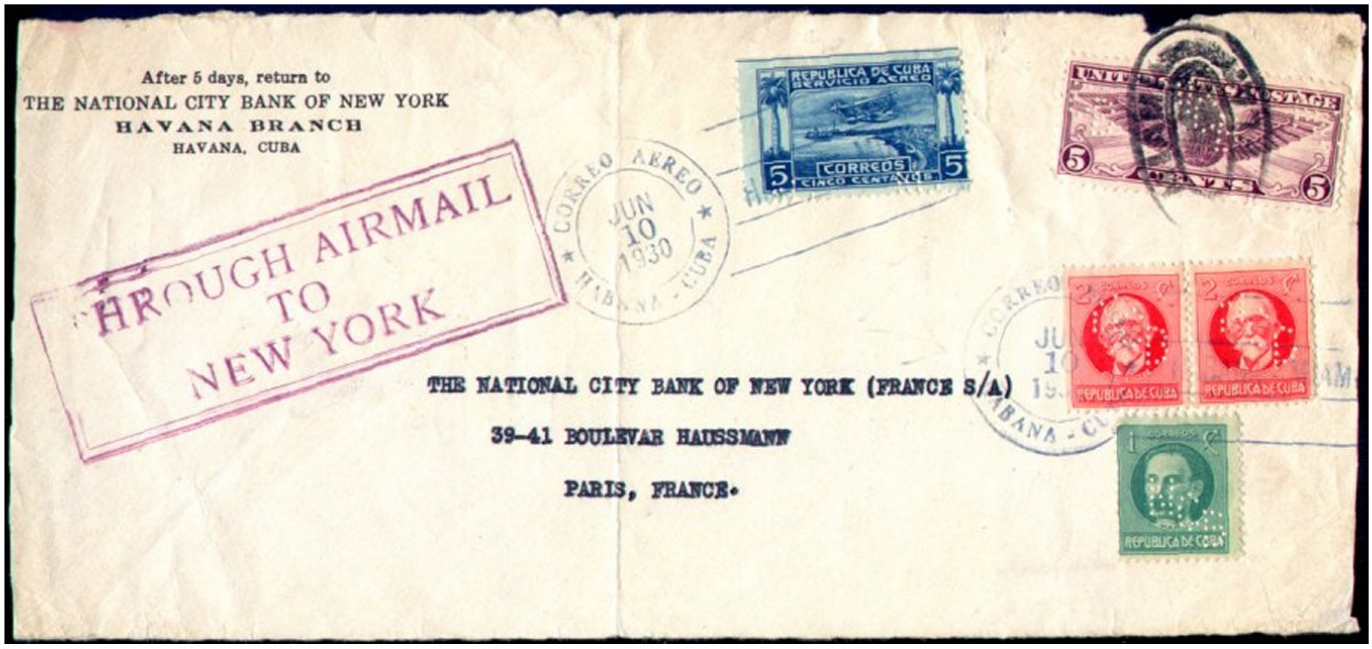
By Rudy Roy (1124)

The illustrated cover front attracted my attention when I first saw it on e-Bay because of the mixed franking. Additionally the (violet) handstamped directional etiquette "Through Airmail to New York" also drew my attention, as I had not seen such a marking before.

All the stamps - Cuban and U.S. - had the Cuban NCB perfin pattern (*World Perfins Catalog*, Cuba A12) applied in Havana and all the stamps were affixed to the cover in Havana. The NCB pattern is one of the more common found from Cuba. However, according to the U.S. catalog, when that pattern is in a U.S. stamp (it is listed in the U.S. Catalog as N46) it is a B+ rate!

The 5¢ Cuban air mail stamp (Sc# C1) was used to pay the air mail fee for a letter weighing up to one half ounce for the FAM-4 or FAM-5 flight (both were Havana - Miami routes) to Miami. The 5¢ U.S. air mail stamp (Sc# C12) paid the U.S. domestic air mail one ounce rate from Miami to New York. And, the two 2¢ Maximo Gomez and 1¢ Jose Marti Cuban definitives paid the UPU surface rate of 5¢ per half ounce for the transit by ship from New York to Paris.

All four Cuban stamps were cancelled in Havana with a blue airmail handstamp that includes in the killer bars "HABANA - MIAMI". However, the U.S. airmail stamp is canceled only with a Miami, Fla., oval.

Was this mixed franking an approved procedure? If not, I believe it was an accepted practice. My reasons for this conclusion:

1. this is a commercial cover from a bank with extensive international operations; the bank employees would be well versed in mail matters as they had extensive operations involving the mails.
2. the stamps were canceled ONLY by the appropriate country's postal services.
3. the perfins are those used by NCB in Cuba, not the ones the bank used in the U.S., so they must have been applied to all the stamps - Cuban and U.S. - in Havana.
4. the "Through Airmail" handstamp would indicate that the sender was aware that sufficient postage was affixed to pay for this service in the U.S.